

**Testimony Regarding Provisions Affecting Legislative Commissions in
HB 6350: An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, and Other
Provisions Relating to Revenue**

Sarah Esty and Cyd Oppenheimer, J.D.
Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, an independent, research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

We oppose the elimination of the Commission on Children and its consolidation into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy, as proposed in HB 6350. The Commission on Children performs a vital role in promoting the wellbeing of children and youth in Connecticut, providing critical information, expertise, education, convening power, and funding in its collaborative work with local communities, philanthropic organizations, providers, parents, and the state. A single representative for the interests of children on a broad-based commission without a clear focus on this population (which otherwise lacks a political voice) will be much less able to engage in these important activities.

For nearly three decades, the Commission on Children has helped **secure millions of dollars in grant funding** for programming and trainings. It played an integral role in bringing together the philanthropy community to **support the ECE Planning Team** and organizing community forums to **provide a public voice** to the leaders. The Commission on Children is also a key **partner for local communities** working to improve their practices and services for children, including participation in the creation of the state's first city Blueprint for Young Children and Families in Hartford in 2005. It has also **developed and backed important legislation** around home visitation, education reform, bullying, lead poisoning, child poverty and more. Most recently, the Commission has been on the ground and across the state helping **provide resources to parents, children, teachers, and others affected by the tragedy in Newtown.**

In light of these crucial supports the Commission on Children provides to the state, providers, parents, children, and local governments, as well as the minimal cost savings resulting from its elimination, we urge you to reinstate the Commission on Children and oppose its consolidation into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.